



211 LA County

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL FEDERATION OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY
Serving Los Angeles County since 1981

June 6, 2019

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the report and recommendation on the feasibility of establishing a 3-digit dialing code for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system.

On behalf of 211 LA County, I strongly agree that a 3-digit dialing code for suicide prevention and mental health crisis is needed.

N11 dialing has proven its effectiveness over the years in supporting public needs. Out of all the N11 dialing codes, 211 is the most feasible option to serve as the national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline.

211 is already recognized across the United States, serving about 94% of the nation's people, as an easy-to-remember contact for crises and health and human services needs. 211 call handling personnel receive extensive training on how to support people experiencing a wide range of crises including domestic violence, elder abuse, hate crimes, child protection, mass casualty events, homelessness, natural disasters, threats of homicide, human trafficking, substance use disorders, serious mental health crises, and also suicide calls.

Using 211 for both suicide prevention and community information and referral has not only been deemed technically feasible by the North American Numbering Council, but has already been operationalized. In 2017, approximately one million contacts handled by 211 call centers were related to suicide, mental health, or addiction. In fact, about 25% of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) call centers are also 211 call centers. These blended NSPL/211 programs have successfully promoted 211 as the local number to call for suicide prevention and information and referral services without incident or confusion.



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211 LA County offers the following recommendations in establishing a national 3-digit dialing code for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system:

1. Develop a partnership between NSPLs and 211s nationwide.
2. Include stakeholders from both organizations, and additional organizations such as United Way Worldwide, AIRS, specialized text services and representation of indigenous communities in implementation discussions.
3. With the approval of NSPL, establish a blended NSPL/211 system:
 - a. 2-1-1 inquirers could be directed to one of two completely independent systems through an initial command; or an enhanced integration could be established that provides economies of scale for the providers/funders and potentially improved service for the public.
 - b. NSPL, in collaboration with SAMSHA, should retain control of routing suicide-related calls to appropriately skilled staff, training, supervision, and support.
 - c. Utilize 211 centers, who meet the training and support requirements of the NSPL, to add capacity to meet the surge of calls that will follow the expanded use of 211.
4. Maintain separate governance of the existing specialized service funded by the Veteran Affairs Department.
5. Establish a realistic and sustainable funding process for any new or enhanced suicide prevention service that is based around a three-digit number.

Thank you for considering our feedback, and please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions or would like to further discuss these ideas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Maribel Marin', is written in a cursive style.

Maribel Marin
Executive Director
211 LA County